

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 15046

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, UR

SUBJECT: TIGHTENING OF SOVIET EMIGRATION POLICY

1. SUMMARY. A NEW, MORE RESTRICTIVE POLICY GOVERNING EMIGRATION HAS BEEN ADOPTED IN THE UKRAINE. IF ADOPTED ELSEWHERE, POTENTIAL EMIGRANT POOL WILL BECOME SMALLER. END SUMMARY.

2. DISSIDENT MOSCOW JEWISH SOURCES TOLD US OF A NEW OVIR POLICY OF REFUSING TO ACCEPT EMIGRATION APPLICATIONS FROM INDIVIDUALS WHO WOULD LEAVE PARENTS OR SIBLINGS BEHIND ON EMIGRATING FROM THE SOVIET UNION (PREVIOUS POLICY WAS TO REQUIRE PERMISSION FROM PARENTS NOT EMIGRATING). OUR SOURCES SAY THAT THE UKRAINIAN REPUBLIC OVIR HAS INFORMED SEVERAL KIEVAN JEWS THAT THE NEW POLICY WAS ADOPTED EFFECTIVE SEPT 1, "PURSUANT TO MOSCOW DIRECTIVE". THE ODESSA OVIR REPORTEDLY PUT THIS POLICY INTO EFFECT AS OF SEPT 10, AND OVIRS IN OTHER UKRAINIAN CITIES ARE ALSO BEGINNING TO APPLY THE NEW REGULATIONS.

3. OUR SOURCES ADD THAT THERE HAVE BEEN ISOLATED AND UNCONFIRMED REPORTS OF ADOPTION OF A SIMILAR POLICY IN TASHKENT AND DUSHANBE. OUR SOURCES SAY THAT THUS FAR THEY HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO GET CONFIRMATION FROM THE ALL-UNION OVIR THAT THE EMIGRATION GROUND RULES HAVE IN FACT BEEN CHANGED, BUT SEVERAL APPEALS FROM
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DECISIONS TAKEN UNDER THE NEW POLICY ARE CURRENTLY UNDER

REVIEW AT THE ALL-UNION LEVEL.

4. OUR SOURCES SAY THAT THE JEWISH DISSIDENT COMMUNITY HAS BEEN QUITE DISTURBED BY THE REPORTS OF THE CHANGED POLICY IN THE UKRAINE, BECAUSE OF THE LARGE NUMBER OF JEWS LIVING THERE, AND BECAUSE THE POLICY DECISION MAY BE EXTENDED SOON THROUGHOUT THE USSR. SOURCES ALSO ADMIT THEY HAD LONG ANTICIPATED AN INCREASE IN EMIGRATION (AND EASING IN APPLICATION OF REGULATIONS) IN THE PERIOD BEFORE THE U.S. PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION. THEY CONFESSED TO BEING SOMEWHAT SURPRISED AT THE TIMING OF THIS RESTRICTIVE MOVE. THEY OBSERVED, HOWEVER, THAT THERE HAVE BEEN ISOLATED CASES IN THE PAST OF OVIRS REFUSING TO GRANT EMIGRATION PERMISSION IN CASES IN WHICH A PARENT OR SIBLING WOULD BE LEFT BEHIND ON THE GROUNDS THAT IT WOULD LEAD TO A BREAKUP RATHER THAN A REUNION OF A FAMILY.

5. COMMENT: SOVIET AUTHORITIES COULD INDEED INTERPRET THE NEW REGULATIONS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE CSCE FINAL ACT BY ARGUING THAT IT IS WRONG TO BREAK UP ALREADY EXISTING FAMILIES. GIVEN THAT A LARGE PERCENTAGE OF THE JEWS EMIGRATING FROM THE SOVIET UNION HAVE RELATIVES WHO WISH TO STAY, THE SOVIETS MIGHT WELL FIND THIS A USEFUL TACTIC TO REDUCE EMIGRATION WHILE TRUMPETING THEIR COMPLIANCE WITH THE HELSINKI FINAL ACT.
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